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GOOD MORNING!

He gives twice who gives quickly.

(Syrus)

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North Koreans Free Crew Of The Pueblo

WASHINGTON (AP) — North Korea released the 82 crew members of the USS Pueblo Sunday after the United States signed a statement of guilt and apology for violating North Korean territory— a statement which the United States repudiated in advance as false.

Secretary of State Dean Rusk declared this "strange procedure" was used to obtain the freedom of the men and it apparently appealed to the North Koreans because they see "propaganda value even in a worthless document."

U.S. officials said privately this was a "kooky" arrangement, conceding that what it means in fact is that the U.S. negotiator at Panmunjom, Korea, Maj. Gen. Gilbert H. Woodward, had signed on instruction from the State Department a document which in the U.S. view contains lies.

The arrangement with the North Koreans covered the release of the 82 surviving members of the intelligence ship Pueblo and the return of the body of Seaman Duane D. Hodges.

Hodges lost his life at the time four North Korean naval ships captured the intelligence vessel Pueblo last Jan. 23.

Three of the crew members had been reported wounded. State Department officials said Sunday night that North Korea had reported all three are all right.

The State Department announced the release of the Pueblo crew as taking place at Panmunjom.

It said "they will immediately be given medical examinations and returned to the United States." Officials said they would be in San Diego, Calif., by Christmas day and their families will meet them there.

The statement which Woodward signed at Panmunjom Sunday, simultaneously with the freeing of the crew members, admitted guilt as North Korea charged, and apologized and set out assurances of no future intrusions.

Before he signed the statement, however, the State Department said, he read a formal statement of repudiation which had previously been given to the North Korean negotiators.

"The position of the United States government with regard to the Pueblo, as consistently expressed in the negotiations at Panmunjom and in public," Woodward declared, "has been that the ship was not engaged in illegal activity, that there is no convincing evidence that the ship at any time intruded into the territorial waters claimed by North Korea, and that we could not apologize for actions which we did not believe took place.

"The document which I am going to sign was prepared by the North Koreans and is at variance with the above position, but my signature will not and cannot alter the facts. I will sign the document to free the crew and only to free the crew."

President Johnson issued a statement expressing his gratification at the release of the men and calling their imprisonment totally unjustified.

He expressed sorrow over the death of Hodges but voiced pleasure that others will be able to rejoin their families for Christmas.

And he said he is grateful "for the understanding which the Pueblo families showed through

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PUEBLO

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the long, painful period during which their government has sought to free the crew."

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MORE

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